

Fisheries Habitat Workgroup
February 11th, 2015 Meeting Minutes

In attendance: Jim Gracie, Eric Schott, Roger Trageser, , Captain Mike Cassidy, Jim Long, Bonnie Bick, Tom Brown, John Page Williams, Theresa Moore (Valley Planning Council), Amy Owsely (Eastern Shore Land Conservancy), Margaret McGinty, Alexis Park, Marek Topolski
Matt Lawrence, Roman Jesien, and Helen Stewart participated via conference call.

Updates:

Members reported back what they learned from their county regarding fish habitat and how it is considered in planning. Jim Gracie had proposed a question at the January workgroup meeting for workgroup members to ask their county - *What are the fisheries concerns at the local/county level? Are there any formal step(s) that address aquatic habitat in the development of the comprehensive plan? If so, what are those formal steps and who represents them?* A few members reported back that there is no process that represents fish and/or fish habitat present in their county.

Action: Members will continue to seek information regarding their county to answer the proposed question from Jim Gracie.

Members discussed learning more about their counties, planning process, and the comprehensive plans, as well as trying to have representation on county councils advocating for fisheries/fish habitat. There seem to be several advisory boards/councils/commissions that have similar interests, such as environmental quality board, agriculture board, etc. Workgroup member could seek to participate in order to represent fisheries interests.

Action: A possible need to contact councilmen/women via letter in counties to obtain representation on boards/councils/commissions for fish and fish habitat.

Members discussed the "Sensitive Areas Element" in the comprehensive plan or the present lack of a Sensitive Areas Element in current comprehensive plans. Helen sent out a link to a "Sensitive Areas Element" that could be used as a model for counties that lack a "Sensitive Areas Element" in their comprehensive plan.

Jim Gracie reported on the Jones Fall sub-workgroup. A letter was drafted since the last meeting in January by Jim Gracie and sent out for comments to the sub-workgroup members.

Action: The comments are gathered and the letter will be finalized and sent out as an invitation to invite additional groups to participate in the Habitat workgroup or become partners in future events/goals. Marek will pull out potential partner groups in the Baltimore/Jones Fall Area to contact.

Amy Owsley from the Eastern Shore Land Conservancy (ESLC) was invited by Eric Schott to give a presentation to the Habitat workgroup on how they have promoted conservation of rural lands on the Eastern Shore. Amy Owsley spoke on the development and expansion of the ESLC, which was founded in 1990. ESLC has several partnerships on the non-profit, county, state, and federal levels. ESLC works to promote conservation among land owners and they would be more than willing to add fish and fish habitat practices to their *Best Management Practices* book that they hand out to land owners, etc. The ESLC has the ability to comment on all comprehensive plans and comprehensive zoning (where ordinances are reviewed, where ESLC can influence land use). The ESLC monitors all county's agendas and works to engage themselves on any and all issues possible. ESLC's partners (local advocacy and conservation groups) help them by keeping an eye out in each county. ESLC challenged counties on the eastern shore to sign on to the region wide 2001 ESLC's *Eastern Shore 2010* agreement that puts 50% of land base protected by 2010; they got to 25% by 2010 and 50% of growth into the growth areas (80% into towns and 20% into countryside). ESLC also helps find possible funding for counties, such as Sustainable

MD (provides a certificate to counties that meet qualifications, which would give them the ability to get additional funding in the future).

Action: Possibly join in their annual regional conference or workshops. Margaret will follow up with Amy concerning future partnership and data, such as agriculture BMPs/practices affects on streams (FHEP 2014 spring study).

The ESLC presentation prompted workgroup conversations on planning processes and how to engage in the planning processes, work with other organizations that could be the eyes and ears of the county, HB 341- water resources element, and municipal growth element.

Theresa Moore from the Valleys Planning Council was invited by Jim Gracie to give a presentation to the Habitat workgroup on land use in urban areas and promoting conservation in an urban environment. Theresa spoke on the development and expansion of Baltimore County. The VPC was established in 1962. The *Plan for the Valleys* is 50 years old and still referred to (limited public water and sewer, developing conservation zoning, limited development in the valley and on the slopes, perversions for farming, etc). In 1962, Baltimore County established the urban rural demarcation line (URDL); affective zoning to eliminate development and has remained intact. The VPC follows every development proposal, council agenda, etc. Zoning in Baltimore County is unique to the county, where down/up zoning can occur when anyone can purpose a zoning change on someone else's property. The Master Plan for Baltimore County includes a Water Resources Element but is not referred to due to the fact it is highly technical and people won't read it. VPC uses the trout streams (then and now) to help support conservation

Action: Jim Gracie will be following up with Theresa concerning partnership and a possible trout presentation/support.

The VPC presentation prompted workgroup conversations on pervious versus impervious surfaces, grading, planning covenants, limited support from state agencies, 1000 Friends, the Water Resources Element chapter, Clean Water Act and re-classifying a stream.

After both presentations, workgroup members discussed the need to get involved in development of comprehensive plans in order to raise fisheries concerns. How can the workgroup, connect to the planning stage in counties to promote the importance of sound planning to fisheries and fish habitat?

Workgroup members present had a discussion on opening the workgroup to allow additional individuals to join the workgroup whether or not they are a member of a DNR advisory group. Lack of original workgroup member participation has encouraged the workgroup to open the door to a broader constituent group.

Action: The following questions will be asked to upper management at DNR: Is the workgroup a Fisheries Workgroup? Can the workgroup be opened up?

Objectives for the next meeting: We will discuss the presentations from the February Meeting and resultant or further actions. Margaret will work with Elliott Campbell to present His work on Ecological Economic Assessments. John Page Williams will check with Beth McGee to present CBF's work in this area.

Goals for future meetings: presentations by Eric Eckl on *Water Words that Work* and Eric Michelson on adding fish habitat into the restoration process

Meeting was adjourned at 4:30pm.

Next meeting March 11th, 2015 at CBF from 2:00 – 4:30pm